

Request for Assistance:
Experimental Television Center Ltd.
Program: Further Development of the Paik/Abe
Video Synthesizer
Contact: Nam June Paik, Ralph Hocking

Computers and video are the two most powerful tools of today, said Gene Youngblood. Yet the full-fledged digital computer has not been used in any of the video synthesizers existing today, even the one at Computer Image Corporation. Therefore if we succeed in the fruitful interfacing of a digital computer and video synthesizer, its effect will be phenomenal.

Actually I have done some computer research at Bell Labs as a Residential Visitor in 1967/68 under the guidance of Michael Noll. However I did not incorporate a digital computer into the design of the Paik/Abe Video Synthesizer at WGBH in 1969 because at that time most computers were not movable, and time sharing through telephone lines made the output speed inadequate for on-line operation. However the rapidly advancing computer technology made the introduction of a digital computer into video art quite plausible and economically and artistically viable.

This is not automation in the traditional sense, which is aimed at cutting the cost of personnel, while doing the same job. Our goal is rather the opposite. Digital computer video will open up a fresh new terrain with powerful programs which will awaken the latent desire for video art into the concrete and conscious level, and eventually increase the jobs for video artists, engineers and businessmen.

The beauty of any computer research is that one's efforts will not and cannot be wasted. Computer science is so systematized that every effort of the predecessor, whether success or failure, will be compiled and used by the next comers. As a matter of fact, Boolean Algebra, the essentials of binary system, was invented more than 100 years ago, and it slept for 80 years before getting into service. The vast amount of rules and vocabulary of Machine Language is a 20th century pyramid, which is created by the millions of stones, the toil of thousands of researchers. Since computerized video synthesizers have a vast virgin land before them, there will be little room for duplication with other artists-engineers. Eventually the form will mature and can be set up in many other video centers.

The Experimental Television Center in Binghamton presents a favorable place for this investigation because the Center has two highly qualified people, Don McArthur and Walter Wright, who have had considerable experience with computers and computer programming. The incorporation of the computer into one of the Paik/Abe Video Synthesizers will produce a system which will be made available immediately to artists throughout the State who work at the Center.

Program cost: \$10,000
see itemized budget